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SUBJECT: Somalia Prime Minister's European Travel and Security Concerns

REF: A) Benedict-AF/E email 02/15/2008

Classified by Ambassador Michael Ranneberger for Reasons 1.4 (b, d)

Summary

¶1. (C) Prime Minister Nur Hassan Hussein briefed the Ambassador February 15 on his trip to Brussels and Paris. He also outlined his recent efforts at reconciliation, and spoke of his concerns about security in Mogadishu and those tasked to ensure it. End Summary.

European Travels and Travails

¶2. (C) Prime Minister Hussein outlined for the Ambassador his meetings in Brussels February 11-13 with Javier Solana, High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and Secretary General of the Council of the European Union, Louis Michel, EU Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, and other EU officials and representatives. Hussein updated the Europeans on the situation in Somalia, discussed his cabinet and priorities for reconciliation and security, and requested financial as well as political support. Michel promised 50 million Euro in immediate assistance, and a minimum of 254 million Euro over the period 2008-2015.

¶3. (C) Apparently in reaction to the then ongoing British, French, and Swedish effort at dialogue in Cairo with the Alliance for Re-Liberation of Somalia (ARS), Hussein said he told Solana the TFG feels more comfortable with Saudi Arabia as an intermediary/facilitator. The TFG would like "to avoid" Cairo, the PM told us. He claimed the intention of the Cairo meeting is "not genuine," and indeed was an effort at "spoiling." A large number of delegates to the National Reconciliation Congress (NRC) traveled to Saudi Arabia following the NRC, and the Saudis maintain good and close relations with broad segments of Somalia society. Hussein told his European interlocutors that the TFG did not want a repeat of a Khartoum-type process, and he asked that all effort be made to support the TFG, reconciliation, and the work of SRSO Ould-Abdallah.

¶4. (C) Based on a request made while in Brussels, Hussein traveled February 13 to Paris to meet with Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner. In what Hussein described as a short meeting, Kouchner pleaded financial constraints, but pledged support within the context of the European Union. In order to address security needs, Kouchner offered the TFG instructors. However, according to Hussein, he told Kouchner the TFG has African instructors in the region and "locally well prepared" training available, as well as training facilities, rather what the TFG needs is money.

Reconciliation Efforts

15. (C) Hussein reported that he is pleased with the progress being made on reconciliation. Feedback has been positive, though he admitted it is difficult to identify concrete results. He claimed Sharif Hassan, former Speaker of Parliament, and Sheikh Sharif, the former Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Council of Islamic Courts, as well as former Members of Parliament and others associated with the CIC are interested in dialogue and participating in a political process. Even some of the Shabaab, he said, are interested in finding a way out of Somalia's seemingly endless cycles of violence and chaos. The fact that hard core Shabaab are worried about losing strength is evidence to the PM that he is making progress.

16. (C) The PM expects to have a draft constitution ready by July. Once the draft is completed he plans for an inclusive process of discussion and dialogue, in which all Somalis would participate, including the diaspora. Given the short time remaining for the TFG to continue reconciliation, the PM plans to pursue a locally based ground up approach. He does not plan on reconvening the National Reconciliation Congress. Working through Members of Parliament and local reconciliation councils the PM would like to build strong community engagement in promoting reconciliation.

Ethiopians and Security

17. (C) Asked about the potential for a security vacuum in the wake of an Ethiopian withdrawal, the PM opined that the Ethiopians "seem to be somewhat in a hurry to withdraw." (Comment: Hussein had just arrived from Addis Ababa en route to Mogadishu. End Comment) The Ethiopians would like a face saving way out, either under cover of an expanded African Union Peace Support Mission (AMISOM) or greatly improved and reinforced Somali troops. (Comment: Presumably a UN force would also serve this purpose. End Comment) Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi told Hussein three years have been lost, and Ethiopia is impatient "to see something happening."

The PM's Security Problem

18. (C) In complete candor the PM admitted "we have a problem" when it comes to those charged with providing security. He acknowledged "it is not yet clear" who is in charge of security among the triumvirate of General Darawish (Chief of National Security), Abdi Qeybdid (Chief of Police), and Mohamed Dheere (Mayor of Mogadishu). He said Qeybdid, a former warlord with no experience, is neither qualified nor capable of running a police force. The PM is working to attract former experienced police officers from the diaspora to return to Somalia, not to take over, but to modernize and professionalize the police force. Darawish is "definitely not fully trusted," and there is "too much complexity" surrounding Dheere, who maintains his own active militia. In sum, in an area where Hussein needs both loyalty and capacity, he has neither.

RANNEBERGER